

Looking After Papa's Image

Mary Hemingway Slams Latest Biography, Spends Evenings Answering Letters About Author

NEW YORK (UPI) — Sheaccuracy." (That was evident was, really, a character out of to me when she pointed out a skin on the wall as "my lion, shot in Kenya, 1953" and "that tiger was Tanganyika, 1962.")

Her voice deep, a little rough, sensual. Her figure tiny in the fashionably short blue dress but strong and womanly. Her white hair short, the blue eyes warm and direct.

A copy of "How to Speak Serb-Croat" on the bedside table. A bulletin board with neatly thumbtacked photographs of her on her boat, in a Havana bar with Hemingway himself, at a villa in Italy, fishing off Peru, hunting in Spain. Photographs of her in London during the blitz . . . she was a dark-haired foreign correspondent then covering the Munich pact, the war in France.

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Mrs. Ernest Hemingway, the attractive widow of the writer, stood on a zebra rug in her Manhattan penthouse and with spirit defended the Hemingway image of which she still is a reflection.

The current book on her late husband, "Papa Hemingway", by A.E. Hotchner, is a best-seller. But to her it's "a phony sensational book" with "vast inaccuracies."

"I hate to use a square word, unladylike and vulgar, but it smells to high heaven," said Mary Hemingway.

"I couldn't live with myself if I didn't try in some way to defend Ernest against these invented deprecations against his character."

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The book, which Hotchner says details his experiences with Hemingway, so angered the widow that she filed suit against Hotchner. She charges that what Hotchner says were conversations with Hemingway were based on Hemingway's letters to Hotchner which she claims are "Ernest's personal property," not for publication.

She has stopped five other persons, she said, including author Lillian Ross, from publishing Hemingway letters.

"I have listed 191 errors in the Hotchner book," she continued, producing a carefully typewritten list. "The irony is that Ernest was an absolute fiend for accuracy. Of 12 people mentioned in the book, every single one says what Hotchner has written about them is wrong."

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Mary Hemingway added that she, too, is "a fiend on

Mrs. Hemingway devotes hours each day to answering letters from persons seeking information for articles on Hemingway because otherwise their writings "frequently would be wrong."

For example, even Princeton University's Carlos Baker, whom Mrs. Hemingway describes as her husband's "official biographer," had an error

in his book. He misnamed a boat line that Hemingway took to Italy. "That sort of thing drives me wild," sighed Mrs. Hemingway.

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"The serious mail on Ernest's work, estate or life continues to average about a dozen letters a day," she said. "I thought the correspondence would fall off about six months after Ernest shot himself but it hasn't. I just got a letter from a professor of English in Dakar who is doing a paper on Ernest. It took me a couple of evenings to answer his questions."

Mrs. Hemingway prefers to write about her late husband herself; she has "one million words" of diaries recording their 17 years of marriage. For a book on her life she already has beaten out 40,000 words on her pale blue typewriter, over which hangs a photograph of a white-bearded Hemingway in a heavy gold frame.

In her diaries she has kept notes of "conversations, games we played. We used to drive from Key West to Sun Valley. I've kept a log what we read and what we saw. Signs we read."

She also is working with his publisher, Scribner's, for a book of Hemingway short stories, many of them unpublished before.

"Ernest's policy was to write stuff and put it in the bank in Havana," she smiled. "We did not need the money. He always said he's building up something for Miss Mary."

Organizing and indexing his manuscripts, notes and letters is another task for Mrs. Hemingway. Eventually "the whole shebang," she said, will go to the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library. The manuscripts, worth more than a million dollars, are stored in safe deposit vaults.

Mary Hemingway has settled down as a reluctant New Yorker. Their home in Cuba was given to the Cubans as a museum. Their Key West, Fla., home was sold and also is a museum. She retained their home in Idaho and moved into the New York penthouse.



The late Ernest Hemingway and wife